

## **Department of Water Resources Guidelines for Access to Public Records**

The California Legislature has declared that access to information concerning the conduct of the people's business is a fundamental and necessary right of every person in this state. The California Public Records Act (Act), Government Code Section 6250 et seq., requires that public records, unless specifically exempted from disclosure by law, be made available to the public upon request. The Department of Water Resources (Department) has established the following guidelines to ensure that members of the public fully understand and are afforded the opportunity to exercise their right to inspect and obtain copies of public records.

Public records in the physical custody of the Department that are not exempt from disclosure will be made available for inspection or copying as follows.

1. Any person may review public records of the Department at its headquarters location, District or Division offices during the weekdays and hours that these offices are regularly open for business. Public records will be available for inspection only at the office or location where they are regularly and routinely maintained. Persons interested in viewing or obtaining copies of public records are encouraged to make an appointment.
2. Any person who inspects records of the Department shall not destroy, mutilate, deface, alter or remove any such record or records from the location designated for inspection, but shall physically return the records in the same condition as when received. Public records in the possession of the Department may be inspected only in the presence of departmental personnel, except in those cases where the Director of the Department or his or her designee determines otherwise.
3. Requests for inspection or reproduction of public records:
  - a) Should be placed in writing by the requestor;
  - b) The request should be sent to: Department of Water Resources, Records Management Office, 1416 Ninth Street, Room 338, Sacramento, California 95814.
4. The Department, to the extent reasonable under the circumstances, will provide the following assistance to a member of the public to make a focused and effective request that reasonably describes an identifiable record or records.

- a) Assist the member of the public in identifying records and information that are responsive to the request or to the purpose of the request if stated.
  - b) Describe the information technology and physical location in which the records exist.
  - c) Provide suggestions for overcoming any practical basis for denying access to the records or information sought.
- 5. Within ten (10) calendar days of receipt of a request for a copy of records, written notice will be provided to the requestor as to whether the Department has disclosable public records that are responsive to the request. Where unusual circumstances exist as specified in Government Code Section 6253(c), the Department may, by written notice to the requestor, extend the time for response when additional time is needed to further research the request. No time extension shall exceed fourteen (14) additional calendar days.
- 6. The Department may decline to disclose any records that are exempt from disclosure under the Act. (See Gov. Code Section 6254, et seq.)
- 7. The Department will provide copies of any requested public records not exempt from disclosure upon payment of the following fees:
  - a) A fee of ten (10) cents per page will be assessed for the reproduction of letter or legal size paper records.
  - b) Fees for the reproduction of other records, including microfilm, will be assessed in the amount to recover the Department's direct costs of reproducing the records.
  - c) For records stored in an electronic format, the provisions of Government Code Section 6253.9, which authorizes the assessment of programming and computer services costs necessary to produce the requested record(s), shall apply. Where the Legislature has established a statutory fee for the reproduction of any given record, the statutory fee shall be charged. The Department may waive these fees if the costs of retrieval and duplication are less than the cost of processing the payment.
- 8. A copy of these guidelines shall be posted in a conspicuous public place at all Department offices. A copy of these guidelines shall be made available free of charge to any person requesting them.